

NRCC Finance Committee Meeting Minutes - Approved
January 17, 2024
8:30 am
Zoom Meeting

Agenda

1. Welcome (Rick)
2. Review and approve meeting minutes (Clare)
3. Legislative Update/VACD Update (Jill)
4. Grant proposals, approvals, and updates
 - TFS subagreement amendment (Jess)
 - Design & Implementation Block Grant proposal (Lina)
 - AgCWIP – (Emily)
5. Finance reports (Clare & Lina)
6. Other business, as required

Attendance

Voting Members: Rick Hopkins and Richard Noel

Other attendees (non-voting):

Jill Arace, VACD Director

Clare Ireland, Finance Director

Jess Miller, Grants & Finance Manager

Emily Nummer, Agriculture Programs Manager

Lina Smith, Grants & Finance Manager

Michelle Schulhof

The meeting was called to order at 8:35 am.

Welcome

Rick welcomed everyone.

Review and Approve Meeting Minutes

Clare presented the finance committee meeting minutes of December 20, 2023.

Jill made the following correction to page 3: "VAAFM put out \$3 m in the 2023 AgCWIP bid two years ago, but this funding round has [stet.] NRCC and Conservation Districts were awarded over \$2.5 m over four years in the 2023 round, and this new proposal will add additional funding for the last two years of that agreement (FYs 2025 & 2026), thereby significantly increasing NRCD resources for agricultural technical assistance."

Rick requested that page numbers be added to minutes.

Richard made the motion, seconded by Rick to approve the minutes with the correction/additions. Upon a call for a vote, all were in favor.

Legislative Update/VACD Update (Jill)

Jill reported that it is the early stages of the legislative process. We are still waiting for the Agency of Ag's proposed budget for us. As noted at the last meeting, there is also a good possibility the budget could be cut across agencies.

- One-on-one meetings with legislators are now taking place.
- A letter was sent to all legislators asking for support.
- Jill and Adelaide met with Trevor Squirrell from the House Appropriations Committee who will be advocating for our budget. He asked how the money is spent and noted that he is not keen on dividing money across districts. He favored allocation of money to districts based on need.
- Will be focusing on the senate Environment Energy Committee whose chair is not terribly supportive of agriculture. Trying to have one on one meetings with those committee members.

Jill asked for guidance around future potential needs to cut the budget. She noted that she does not want to cut Council further since Council's budget has already been trimmed by about a third, but suggested cutting proportionally across districts. Richard agreed to this method.

Jill added that the house Corrections and Institutions committee considers the capital budget separately.

Richard noted that Franklin County NRCDC has put in a capital request for a new building possibly at the Field Day's site. Districts with capital requests should provide detailed justifications for their requests.

Grant Proposals, Approvals, and Updates

Design & Implementation Block Grant proposal (Lina)

Pam Stefanick from OCNRCDC and property owner Michelle Schulhof answered questions from the finance committee regarding the request for funds (\$27,672) through the Design and Implementation Block Grant for the Littlefield Gully Design.

After discussion Rick made the motion, seconded by Richard to approve the project. Upon a call for a vote, all were in favor

Lina requested approval for three Strategic Wood Addition projects:

Connecticut River Conservancy – Lost Meadow, \$52,741
Winooski NRCDC – North Branch Winooski Headwaters, \$63,170
Redstart – Desire Path, \$32,610

A motion was made by Rick, seconded by Richard to approve the three projects. Upon a call for a vote, all were in favor.

Jill requested approval for a \$5,500 increase to Essex CNRCDC's Baptist Hill Road Mink Brook Culvert project. She explained this was needed to fund the cultural resource review that is needed for all new

projects and noted it was forgotten in the initial request, in part because it is a new requirement of these grants. Clare added that this type of budget amendment request might happen again because this is a new grant with new requirements. Rick made the motion, seconded by Richard, to approve the \$5,500 increase. Upon a call for a vote, all were in favor.

Jill reviewed the following:

1. If a project budget is over \$20,000, it comes to the Finance Committee for approval.
2. If a project budget is under \$20,000, it can be approved by the respective program manager.
3. If a project budget is already approved by the Finance Committee, but requires additional funds up to \$20,000, this increase can be approved by the program manager.
4. If a project budget was less than \$20,000, but requires an amendment that brings the total cost to over \$20,000, the project goes to the Finance Committee for approval.

AgCWIP – (Emily)

Emily noted the AgCWIP proposal discussed at the last meeting was submitted. The request came in higher than originally anticipated at \$3M. The proposal includes a training program the agency may not approve. The award announcement will be in March with the allocation in June. We anticipate that we won't receive the full award and will come back to the finance committee to help with allocation decisions.

TFS subagreement amendment (Jess)

Jess presented a budget amendment request for the Poultney Mettowee NRC D Trees for Streams project (see letter in file):

Original Award Amount	Original Cost/Acre	Requested Increase	New Award Amount	New Cost/Acre
\$33,654.00	\$4,079.27	\$8,831.41	\$42,485.41	\$5,149.75

Jess noted that Poultney Mettowee has a competitive cost/acre and has not usually gone over their budget in the past. She also noted this will not impact awards to other districts because of leftover funds.

Rick made the motion, seconded by Richard, to approve the amendment. Upon a call for a vote, all were in favor.

Finance reports (Clare & Lina)

Clare went through the draft FY23 financial statements noting the following:

- They are not final. She is still finalizing a few things in QuickBooks.
- We stuck very close to our projected budget for the year:
 - a. Total income was 93% of expected
 - b. Total expense was 95% of expected
- \$1,000 other income from NASCA is for reimbursement for attending their annual meeting.

- The distribution between federal, state and non-governmental income is impacted by how personnel costs are allocated. (Clare is still reviewing this, and this is one aspect of the financial statements that is subject to change in the future.)
- How we book things changes how we spend down funding sources.
- Our predictions for a historically large budget were accurate. Most of this represents money that we are getting out the door to districts.

She will be meeting with Jill to review some outstanding personnel expense questions and will bring the financial statements back to the finance committee when final. Rick asked Clare to consider if there is any benefit to passing this along to Agency of Ag, DEC etc.

Other business, as required: There was no other business

Rick made the motion to adjourn at 10:02 am. Richard seconded the motion. Motion was voted and approved.